

VALUABLE ADVICE TO SHIPPERS.

Secretary Coburn of the Kansas Department of Agriculture, furnishes the following facts:

In the preparation of the quarterly report of the Kansas Board of Agriculture devoted to "The Beef Steer," Secretary F. D. Coburn aimed to not only secure the views of those who are masters in beef production but also avail himself of observations by others among those who deal with the stock when it reaches the market.

No one has a keener eye for the merits and defects of the beef animal, both as to his individual quality, condition and the treatment given him at home and on his way to market, than the salesman who receives, cares for and sells him to the slaughterer or shipper. From the counsel given by one of the most extensive live-stock commission firms, the following excellent advice for every feeder and shipper is given, and is the result of very extensive experience and wide observation. They say:

In the first place, a large majority of the feeders makes a mistake in holding fat cattle that are ready for market; for instance, a man feeding 100 to 150 head of steers, and there are, say, one-half or two-thirds of the cattle that are fat and could be shipped at any time. Very few men will ship them out, for the simple reason that all their cattle are not ready, and they hold on to the good ones until the entire bunch is ready. We are continually advising our customers to ship out all fat cattle as fast as ready. By doing so, they divide their risk. The cattle that are left have a better chance to improve, and there is more profit to be made in this way, on account of the small margin there is in keeping matured steers, as this class of cattle make little gain compared with half fat steers.

Another mistake that is made is in shipping out fat cattle on grass. We have had a number of instances where our customers have shipped cattle that were fed on the grass without putting them in a dry lot for a day or two before shipment and feeding nothing but corn, oats and hay, and by not doing so, the cattle on arrival look grassy, their hair looks shiny, they shrink almost double what they would if handled in the proper way, and they don't sell within 10 to 15 cents per hundred (and in some cases more) of cattle that are put in a dry lot and fed nothing but corn, hay and oats for a short time before shipment.

Overloading is a very bad feature, but we are not troubled as much, in this respect, as we were before the change of freight by cents per 100 pounds became established. A little advice on this subject is still quite necessary, as we have customers frequently who overload their cattle, and, as a result, they make extra shrinkage; they do not look as well at market, which, as you are aware, affects the sale fully 10 cents per hundred pounds; this means a direct loss to the shipper of 10 cents per hundred, and the extra shrinkage, which is quite a large item, that could be saved with proper management.

The best investment a shipper ever made was in putting extra-good bedding in his cars. This is a point which should be well looked after, as it means a big saving from loss of possibly dead or crippled cattle, as well as the shrinkage. We think another point that could be well covered would be, where parties are shipping stock, to classify it as much as possible. In this way the cars are more evenly loaded, the stock ships much better, and it also saves considerable delay upon arrival here. The work of sorting and shaping stock at this end is a very small item, but by classifying the stock in the country it means economy of time at the market. Cattle handle better if they do not get too much water

just before shipment. The golden rule in shipping all kinds of cattle is to get them as quickly as possible from range, ranch, farm or feed yard to market. Notably is this the case with rangers. It has been proven time and again that a range bullock shrinks every hour after he leaves his native haunts. It stands to reason that all cattle will do so, but natives do not fret, nor are they liable to get so bruised as the former.

Grass cattle, as a rule, do not ship well. On the pasture they look well, and many a buyer has been deceived by the appearance of a drove of steers in a grass field with a fall hint. To ship such cattle is a hard task, and is invariably disappointing, but it has to be done. Where convenient, it is a good plan to place such cattle in a pen and feed them hay for a day or two. The secret of shipping all classes of cattle is to place them on the cars full of feed, but with as little moisture as possible. If you ship a car full of water, you are apt to have loose bowels and show up in the yards badly. Properly handled cattle should arrive in the sale pens dry behind, and ready for a good fill of water; not over-thirty, but in good condition to water freely.

Many of our shippers think that by salting their cattle, or by feeding them oats, or by other scheming, they can fool the buyers. This is nonsense. The buyers are just as sharp as the owners, and while many of them say nothing, you often see them ride into a pen and out again without the courtesy of a bid, on this account. Dozens of times we have seen this happen. It always acts against the shipper to use unnatural means. To eastern buyers it is a matter of great importance that cattle should be in good condition when purchased, so as to stand further shipment. When cattle drink too freely they are apt to founder and break down. In this condition the dressed-beef man can use them, but it stops competition, and as a natural consequence, cattle often go below their value when in this condition.

The same rule applies to grain-fed cattle, whether in pasture or dry lot, as to the above. Only they are much more easily handled in shipment, and do not show much distress in their changed circumstances. As to feed on the road, nothing equals good, sweet hay. It beats corn or other grains, because it is easily digested and does not fever the animal. Simple methods and simple feed are the best that can be used. As to water on the road, it is a matter to be decided on according to the weather. In midsummer care must be taken to supply animal wants, whereas in winter a steer can go many hours without a drink. Good management in this line also calls for the arrival of stock at the yard in proper time. From 5 to 8 a. m. is the best time in the day to appear upon the scene—the nearer the latter hour the better—for cattle especially always look better when they are taken off the cars and have just been fed and watered. Then, they have a bloom upon them, which wears off very quickly.

Many feeders would be saved both disappointment and loss if before sending in cattle to market they would notify their commission house what and when they are going to ship. Then, if the commission merchant thinks the stock would be benefited by longer feeding, or that the prospect is unfavorable for the time the feeder expected to have his cattle in, he can so advise his client, and thus save him from sacrificing his stock or getting in at the wrong time. Especially is this important in November or the beginning of winter, when we are getting half-fat cattle that ought to have been held back thirty or sixty days longer at least. No doubt many of these look all right in the feed lot and appear to have good flesh, but not having

matured or ripened they practically "go to pieces" on the cars, and in addition to loss through heavy shrinkage the owner has to accept a low price on the market. We wish every stockman would follow out this plan of giving notice a day or so ahead of the time he expects to ship. It works both to the advantage of the shipper and seller. The latter, being on the market every day, knows just what the market wants and can judge pretty closely of near prospects. He is thus able to give his client the necessary advice and information he should have before he sends in his stock.

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